WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

Published occasionally by the Washtenaw Historical Society,
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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1209 S. State Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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Vol. 13, No. 6 February, 1958

AN IGNORAMUS LOOKS AT ENGLAND

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Presented before The Washtenaw Historical Society January 28, 1958.
Original Copy on File with the Michigan Historical Collections.

I. FROM STONEHENGE TO CROMWELL.

INTRODUCTION

There is a bit of guile in employing the word "ignoramus", as we are boldly taking a slant at England, beyond our depth, from the beginnings to modern times. Professor Slosson and I will impress England onto American life, with a supply of little hints here and there, even tying the old sod down to Ann Arbor.

Now, of course, our language, which we are employing today in this very hall, has its basic origins in the culture which we extracted from England, even though we enjoy a wealth of strong direct Teutonic culture in Ann Arbor.

I want to look back for a moment to those early monoliths at Stonehenge. I think all of you have seen pictures of them -- those enormous stone symbols -- or have seen them in person. Some are carved, and all have been shaped and placed by man and hold some religious and astronomical significance. They represent a record in our background, turning and churning time to about 1700 B.C. in man's activities. This is where the ignoramus steps into the picture. You may call me an anthropological and geological liar, but that date is a nice landmark in my time estimates to begin this tale.

THE PRE-CELTS

It is believed that these monoliths were erected by a pre-Celtic people. Some historians refer to any of the aborigines of the Isles as Celts. However, strictly speaking, we should describe these folk as pre-Celts. They were a smaller and darker people than the Celts, and they may have had their origins in the Iberian Peninsula. They may have had some Basque and Berber bloods in their veins.

That is a very far cry into the past and truly beyond my ken.

GOIDEL FOLK

About the 13th Century B.C. there surged a great horde of red-headed, blue-eyed Goidels into the Island, many of them stopping in what now is England. It was indeed a great invasion, extending on for many concatenating generations. They made quite a game of skull-cracking. Where they failed in murderous destruction, they succeeded in absorption. Thus today in England there are little darker islands of people remaining. Some anthropologists have insisted that these remnants were colored up by the leavings of the pre-Celts that were allowed to stay, influencing some complexions down to our very day.

Now, who were these red-headed folk,known as Goidels? They were true Celts, who were displaced from their European strongholds by Teutonic tribes, ever pushing westward. The Celts reached the channel, crossed it and brought with them some interesting sidelines of culture. There are even evidences that they introduced some Egyptian artifacts. In this mob scene of humanity in motion appeared as captives some fair-haired Teutons also. But by and large the Goidels became the remote ancestors of the Highland Irish and the Highland Scots.

Some new migrants, in the looming centuries, were welcomed, and others were repelled by whatever rugged means might be at hand. More or less of a basic Goidel civilization did finally exist in what is now called England.

There are Goidel or ancient Irish residuals in our modern English language. The "ric" in "bishopric" is a corruption of the genetive "rig" of the old Goidel word "ri", meaning king. At times there was a "ping-pong" play between the races of men and the shifting of words and their meanings. We think of the English word "druid" as an offspring of the Latin "druidae." Yet the original stem, which bounced to Latin and back again, was actually a cognate of the Goidel "drui."

I read not too long ago that certain of the Goidels sailed direct from Europe's shore to Ireland, but most of the authorities agree that there was also a "stopping-over" in "England" for a number of centuries. Probably the migrations ceased about 700 B.C. From 700 B.C. to 500 B.C. there was a period of quiescence. Red-headed folk thus settled down to a stable culture.

BRYTHON FOLK

About 500 B.C. an entirely new set of Celtic peoples crossed the channel -- ancestors of the British -- the ancient Brythons. However, sad to relate, there is hardly a true Britisher left in England today.

These Brythons began their heroic destructive techniques upon the skulls and the bodies of the Goidels, killing them, enslaving them or chasing them westward towards Ireland. However, there were always some smatterings of Goidel blood and words absorbed.

Let us picture a home scene at the time of their wholesale invasion. Men, women, children -- all arrived. But the bachelor warriors faced a different problem. Into a Goidel's hut strides a great auburn-haired Briton. He with tribal assistance kills the man of the house, lays low the teen-age sons, takes the weeping widow as his wife that very day and roughly swoops up the children into a full scale adoption. Marriage did not necessarily manumit the slave.

In this way some of the Goidel word-stems lingered on with the Britons. Also, in like regard, do not ignore the Sanscrit terms that came from India, and created related words in many European tongues, or modified their meaning via a trope.

The Britons finally established their own civilization and became quite elaborate in their crafts, which were influenced by the skills of certain Belgic tribes. Capability in crude trades was well marked in this period.

ROMAN ERA

When the Romans arrived in 55 B.C. they found the Britons a thriving race. We now observe a new type of conquering herd. The Romans did not displace the Britons but penetrated them. They brought to the Isle engineering, sanitation, coinage, the Latin language, legal procedure and many blessings of a great civilization. Although the Britons did not make direct application to Rome for the importation of this new civilization, they accepted the beneficence.

Don't think that this was just a Saturday picnic. You will find that there were fought some terrific bang-up battles. These Britons were not military sissies, with their abatised defences, but on the other hand, they were no match for an upsurging world empire. British and Roman roots of civilization blended to form a new Romance country, and a Briton-Romance language actually developed in the first few hundred years A.D. Then what happened to the Latin portion of the language that was forming? A distant invasion was the answer.

THE ANGLO-SAXON INVASION

In the fifth century A.D. the Germanic Angles, Saxons, and Jutes went storming across the seas and ran amuck with the Romano-Britons, chasing the major portion of the Latin language out of the country towards the west, and absorbing tid-bits here and there in motion.

But here before I take one step further in this bloody tale, let me remind you that when the Anglo-Saxon invasions occurred, a few little Latin words were a party to such a movement. These earthy Teutons were already exposed to a smattering of Latin terms that were borrowed from Roman legions along the Rhine. Among others they introduced the word "ynces", which they obtained indirectly from the Roman form "uncia" along the Rhine frontier. In its new home across the Channel "ynces" was finally modified to "inch", still meaning a "twelfth part" and related by devious means to "the ounce".

Another intriguing little Anglo-Saxon journey was made by the Latin word "strata", which went through like modifications into

"straet" and "street". I fear that the modern German word "Strasse" is an illegitimate cousin that evolved in a different direction.

When the Britons were pushed out or killed off, they offered little to their conquerors in the way of Celtic language contribution, with some occasional metamorphoses popping up in least suspected places. The old British stem for "brownish" was "dunn", hiding now in the word "dun-colored".

Many British tribes reassembled in what is now known as Wales. In conversing, a modern Englishman addressed a Welshman with these opening words, "Now, we Britishers ----". The Welshman interrupted, saying, "Pardon me, we are the Celts; we are the Britishers; but you are the Englishmen."

At one time when there was no English Channel, there was merely a river system. By the time the seas came spilling in, there developed a "Pre-Celtic Channel," then the "Goidel Channel," followed by the "British Channel." It only had a right to the term "English Channel" sometime following the fifth century A.D.

Some interesting and challenging personalities were involved in the Anglo-Saxon raids. The princely Jute brothers, Hengist and Horsa, arrived in Kent about 446 A.D., closely following the first recorded invaders of 441 A.D. The next individual of consequence was a royal youth by the name of Cedric or Cerdic, who became the founder of the Kingdom of Wessex and the originator of the Wessex Dynasty. The English royal blood of Elizabeth II today goes back to Prince Cedric, later King Cedric, who arrived from Europe in 496 A.D.

A burning question arises, "How did the great number of Romance stems become re-introduced into the Isle?" Well, the missionaries offered their little contributions in a timid way at first. They brought along a little Latin that began to stick to the heavy Germanic intonations. As time passed there was introduced the old Roman word "discipulus," from which we have eventually derived "disciple," after several shadings in spelling. Then followed "papa" (Pope), and many other "churchy words". It required, however, a greater future upheaval, as in 1066, to yank Latin back into the Isle "by the carload."

As the country became Germanic, rival kingdoms were established, such as Northumberland, Mercia, East Anglia, Surrey, Kent, Essex, Wessex and Sussex. These petty little kingdoms were all biting at one another. Finally a king by the name of Offa established an Empirium of Anglo-Saxon land, with headquarters in Mercia. He was the King of Kings. His death in 796 wound up that little picture, as his daddocky successors were weaklings.

Over in Wessex a manly king was crowned in 802 by the name of Ecgberth, once trained by Charlemagne. For 25 solid years he was a dutiful Vassal king. Then he turned on his masters and whipped the daylights out of them and took over the Empirium of England in 827 A.D. Here was the first thought of permanent unity in England. Ecgberth established a line of kings, and his blood, from the English side, moves in the royal family today.

There is a vast coterie of interesting descendants: Aethelwulf, Aethelbald, Aethelbert, Aethelred and Alfred The Great. Afred was, in my mind, the greatest ruler that England ever produced, becoming teacher, translator, father confessor, protector of the land against the Danes, living a devoted life every day as king. He earned the royalty in his veins, just like the beautiful little Queen of Greece in our day, and deserved his greatness, as he was the first "man of work" in the kingdom.

For kingly descendants of note one can quote Aethelstan, Edward the Elder, Eadred, Edmund the Magnificient, Edwy, Edgar. The last named sired two rival sons by different wives. One of these boys was dubbed "Edward The Martyr" after death. His scheming step-mother slipped something into the royal drink one day, and Edward was no more. That permitted the promotion of the half-brother, Aethelred the Unready. He was never prepared for battle, when battling was of general issue, being called "The Redeless."

When Aethelred said "I do," he branded England for Norman rule of the future by marrying Emma, Duchess of Normandy, who was crowned Queen Aelgifu of England. He let himself and his immediate offspring believe that by fact or fiction, there was an obligation to Normandy.

There had been many battles with the marauding Danes, but when they landed in 1013 under King Swegn (Sven) Forkbeard, the royal family fled from England. They sought refuge across the channel and "sponged" for some time off the Normandy relatives. Finally, most of them were called back to the home soil. One brave son, Edmund Ironsides, succeeded Aethelred to the kingship. His name indicated strength and resistance in battle. Edmund had no sooner taken the crown than bold Canute (Knut), King of the Danes and successor to Swegn, crossed over to include the throne of England in his laurels. This was in 1017. The Witan divided the kingdom into an "Edmund half" and a "Canute half." Finally, it was all Canute and no Edmund!

Many Danish word stems had previously been brought into England (Danelaw) and now were reinforced. The Danes were famous for putting the "th" in "hem" and "her," creating "them" and "their." We still use the old quickie, "em."

Canute, in spite of his "enemy status," became a forward-looking king and head of a new Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian Empire. Under him many Danish word stems merely reinforced the old Anglo-Saxon forms, producing such common modern words as "man," "wife," "mother," folk," "house," "thing."

Now, Canute had to have a wife in keeping with his station. Like Napoleon of the future, he demanded some one royal, dismissing haughtily the present "lady," who was dangling at royal odds. Canute, upon looking around, gathered much inspiration in sizing up Queen Mother Aelgifu, the widow of Aethelred and the Norman step-mother of Edmund; also the blood mother of Edward, later to be the Confessor of England. Aelgifu realized that Canute represented the despoiler of her royal family, when he walked with insolent stride boldly into her palace. She was showing grey streaks in her hair and had taken on some grandmotherly characteristics. He was just out of the teens. One wee hint at proposal, and they were married pronto!

One sickly little offspring resulted, Hardicanute (Harthacanute). Canute ruled on until 1035, but still died as a youngish man. His natural son, Harold Harefoot, rose up and seized the throne, but he was roughly disposed of and thrown off into a swamp somewhere. Hardicanute, an incapable lad in his teens, became King of England. The actual ruler, who pulled the strings for a few years, was the Queen Mother, the former Duchess of Normandy. The failing boy king sent word to his half-brother in Normandy to consider the responsibility of the throne. Edward the Confessor now became master of England, and "all men called him King."

Many of the old laws of Canute were coded and became the "Laws of Edward." He was an albino. He served humanity more as a Saint than King. A very popular brother-in-law, Earl Harold Godwine, became a possible heir apparent. Also, it would appear that Edward, in a weak or grateful moment, had promised the succession to his cousin, William, Duke of Normandy.

The story also goes that Harold Godwine was once shipwrecked off the Normandy coast and became an unwilling "guest" of William. Under some degree of pressure Harold acquiesced in the Duke's claim and "solemnly" placed his hand on the sacred ashes (could they be of Rollo, the Founder?) and ancient relics of the realm, to reinforce his vows, with tongue in cheek.

Nonetheless in 1066, when Edward left this world, the Witan declared Harold to be the King of England. This Act became an insult to William's fame, claim and fortune, as he felt that England's crown was his by promise and inheritance. Incidentally, he also claimed for his wife, of the Flanders House, a descendant of Alfred The Great.

THE NORMAN INVASION

Harold was not a military slow poke. He had just overcome a revolution in the North with signal success, when William, as entrepreneur, landed in the South. Harold rushed headlong to meet the Norman invasion, poorly organized and with his troops in a state of exhaustion. William defeated the English forces at the Battle of Hastings, killing Harold and succeeding him to the throne before 1066 A.D. had expired in the Christian calendar.

There was now to be an entire new line of kings for Anglo-Saxon land, not Angle or Saxon but Norman. The Norman knights under William were orators, law-givers, warriors, surveyors and expert census takers. Where the Romans might have failed in civilization and unity tendencies 1000 years earlier for the Britons, William corrected their errors in the immediate years that followed 1066, for the Anglo-Saxons.

William and his conquering stalwarts from Normandy now imported the long-patient Latin forms back into England "by the ton." His French was of the "thick variety," but the Latin stems did not know the difference.

Along with William came the ancestors of such polysyllables as "adoration," "vocation," "vacation," "translation," "multiplication."

He found that the short Saxon word "guttal" (gut) could be translated into a Norman polysyllable, derived from the Latin word "intestinum" (intestine). This balance of Saxon short words vs. Norman long words adorns our modern English to the full.

Even though William I was the Conqueror, he became a stalwart leader of the English nation, making a great contrast to his roughneck son, William II. Following the two Williams, Henry I seized the throne during the absence of his older brother Robert, who had absented himself on a crusade. Henry proposed marriage to Princess Edith Matilda, daughter of St. Margaret and King Malcolm Canmore of Scotland, and descendant of Edmund Ironsides. Henry then formed a new and vigorous line, when Norman joined the ancient English blood, uniting the genes of The Conqueror and The Conquered. Henry I and Edith Matilda produced a lineage that penetrates the House of Windsor today.

Henry fathered a daughter, Matilda, who became Holy Roman Empress to the German, Henry V. When widowed, she returned to England and called herself "Domina," but suffering the disillusionment of finding Cousin Stephen on the throne.

Said she, "I, Matilda, am the daughter of the Conqueror's son." Said he, "I, Stephen, am the son of the Conqueror's daughter!" With the resulting struggle for power, the unity of England, which the Conqueror had contrived, was now blown to the winds. Matilda, whose hateful disposition did no credit to the situation, finally agreed to leave England, provided her son superseded Stephen's offspring in heirship. In the meantime the widowed Empress had taken to herself a second husband, Count Geoffrey of Plantagenet, and their child was the future Henry II.

THE PLANTAGENETS

Henry II espoused the famous Eleanor of Aquitaine. They pulled a fast one in royal circles by crowning their first born, Henry Fitzhenry, as the King of England, while Henry II was still in his vigor. However, the father survived the son, and with his vast continental holdings in France, he rivaled the Empire once controlled by Canute. In fact at one time Henry was a serious candidate to the office of Holy Roman Emperor.

England's throne descended to Richard of the Lion Heart, Crusader extraordinary. When Richard was held for ransom in central Germany, Mamma Eleanor wrote the Pope, "Be ye a man of God, or be ye a man of blood?" Needless to say, Richard was released, but he offered no royal heir other than brother John.

It was during John's reign that the Magna Carta was signed in 1215. It became the birthstone of all our freedoms. What the charter really amounted to was a "Bill of Rights" for the barons. I hope this will not disappoint you when you read it. The rights of the mere common man did not at once materialize under the barons' plan at first draft, but the charter finally included everybody by interpretation and the passage of time. Even our freedom on the streets of Ann Arbor begins with the Magna Carta, the blood mother of our Vital Documents, including our sacred papers in Washington, D.C., behind glass.

John did not rank high as either man or king, flunking both jobs on numerous occasions, and he was a midget beside the Magna Carta, which he signed. He did, however, continue the royal line through Henry III. Under this Henry the first Parliament sat in embryo form about 1240. Even our City Council in Ann Arbor imitates that wonderful event whenever it sits down about a discussion table.

Henry's son, Edward I, was the primary king who dreamed up the union of England and Scotland. Edward hoped to marry off the future Edward II to the Maid of Norway, Margaret, the heiress of Scotland. Margaret started across the seas to be espoused to the lad Edward, the first Prince of Wales. She never arrived. The ship was lost, or she was probably murdered. Years later a witch was being burned in Leipsig, Germany. Just before the flames stifled her life, she wailed, "You are burning the Maid of Norway!"

Edward II was a weak successor to a strong father, losing heavily to the Scots in the Battle of Bannockburn, 1314.

Edward III was a more positive personality, succeeding a father who was forcibly removed from the throne. His vaulting ambition to the French throne created the rumblings of the Hundred Years War, 1337-1453, and gave Joan of Arc her place in the sun. With England and France exhausted in the West, it became a routine consideration for the Turks to take Constantinople in the East.

The King's eldest son is recorded in history as Edward the Black Prince, who fathered the uneasy Richard II. A further son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, sired many lines of kings, sharing his generous blood of succeeding generations to Isabella of Spain, the Lancastrian line of kings, the Kings of Portugal, Henry the Navigator, Yorkists, and the Tudors. From the Duke of York came the name but not the claim of the Yorkist contenders.

A brother-in-law of John of Gaunt was the poet, Chaucer. It was he who helped synthesize the English language out of Angle, Saxon and Norman (Latin) ingredients.

In the Canterbury Tales Chaucer makes mention of many fascinating phenomena, including the night birds, as follows:

"And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen all the night with open ye."

Here we find that the Saxon birds ("fowles") are making a Norman kind of melody ("melodye"), both words having become a part of Middle English, in their evolution.

A further couplet runs:

"We alle desyren, if it mighte be,
To han house bondes hardy, wyse and free."

The verb "desyren" is a far relative of the Latin "desidare" and a near Kinsman of Old Norman "desirer". The husbands (Middle English: "housebondes", from Anglo-Saxon; "husbanda") are "hardy" (Old French: "hardi", borrowed from old Teuton: "hardjan"), "wyse" (Old Saxon: "wisa") and "free" (Old Anglo-Saxon: "freoh").

I am sure that Chaucer did not stop and analyze each word, or he would have indulged in a literary creator's headache. His great place in history stems from his selective borrowings of words from divers racial sources, which finally aided in the birth of the English Language.

The bold reflection of Ann Arbor, back to England, lies in the creation in this city of a "Middle English Dictionary," being prepared by Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, and published by the University of Michigan Press.

LANCASTRIAN AND YORK

John of Gaunt's son, the exiled Bolingbroke, less than gently nudged Richard II from the throne, succeeding him as Henry IV, the first Lancastrian King. His son, Henry V, became one of England's greatest military heroes of all time, bringing France to her knees in the battle of Agincourt, 1415, two centuries after the Charter, and stimulating the future Shakespeare to an all out of exciting copy for the proscenium.

The third Lancastrian, Henry VI, though crowned King of France for the record, was a royal flop, both as man and king. He was in and out of office, alternating with the Yorkist rival house. These competing claims were demonstrated by the Wars of the Roses (1453-1497), as sanguinary a spectacle as England could ever provide to a gasping world, not excluding numerous massacres and executions.

The Yorkist line of kings included Edward IV, promoted from the Earlship of March, Edward V, a mere child, smothered by his uncle's pillow, and Richard III, the evil genius of the family.

THE HOUSE OF TUDOR

Richard III was killed in battle and his army defeated at Bosworth Field in 1485, after Henry Tudor had landed at Milford Haven, becoming Henry VII. This claimant to the throne was the maternal great-great-grandson of John of Gaunt, through his irregular marriage with Catharine, the Baroness de Swynford, who rose from mistress to chatelaine. His father was the Earl of Richmond, the result of an unrecorded marriage between the Welsh Squire Tudor and Kate, the beautiful French widow of Henry V. With two irregular blood heritages, it was up to Henry to make good. This he did, marrying his competitor, Elizabeth of York, and becoming one of the wealthiest princes of Europe, being not only avaricious, but cautious and economical. He served as royal matchmaker, and organizer, yielding his daughter blood in the person of Scotland's and France's Queens. Please note that Kate, who was not of the "line", provided genes for royalty, while Henry V was denied such recognition.

Henry VII felt that he was the best-grounded King that England ever possessed. Said he,

"I am the King by conquest.
I am the King by election.
I am the King by inheritance!"

In 1509 Henry VIII succeeded to the throne. No one harked back to that "crowned saint", Henry VI; neither did they regret the passing of Henry VII. Instead they welcomed the joyous, brainy and handsome son, who combined the Tudor intellect and the Yorkish passion.

Yet, hedonistic Henry VIII kept his subjects agog and the clergy busy by his six marriages (two Annes, three Katherines and a Jane). He also "fathered" the English Reformation, more than a decade after Martin Luther had "spoken."

His sickly son, Edward VI, named Lady Jane Grey to succeed the Tudor name, excluding his half sisters, Mary and Elizabeth.

Jane, my own personal historical sweetheart, became Queen of England in 1553, "enjoying" her office for nine tearful days, being displaced by Mary Tudor, "The Bloody". Poor Mary took to husband Phillip of Spain, her first cousin once removed. Her life was filled with delusions of pregnancy, but she remained childless. Weepings and burnings at the stake filled the stormy period when she reversed her father's new faith. Kindly death arrived in 1558.

Then Elizabeth I (1558-1603) rose from uncertainty to "the Place of Pride in the Realm" amidst rejoicings. Here came the great maritime journeys that brought vast wealth and prestige to England.

In Elizabeth's literary day we find the Bard, William Shakespeare. He took the crude creations of Chaucer and his successors and refined them into the English Language, very much as we know it today, with certain exceptions of profundity.

The Virgin Queen was about to let the Tudor line run dry. To keep the royal boat afloat we must marry Margaret Tudor, Elizabeth's aunt, to James IV of Scotland's Stuarts. Their son was James V, married to Mary of Guise-Lorraine. Their daughter known as Mary, Queen of Scots, became a "rightful" successor to Elizabeth, who managed an "off with her head" treatment to Mary Stuart.

Some interesting correspondence took place between Elizabeth of England and James VI of Scotland, son of Mary, Queen of Scots. The final sentence of James turned the trick. When considering the throne of England, he wrote, "I will digest the disposal of my mother!"

THE STUARTS

In 1603 James VI of Scotland brought his brogue and the Stuart blood to England and became James I of England and Scotland in a roughly planned union, fulfilling the dreams of Edward I.

Under authority of James I the heroic voyage to Virginia was accomplished in 1607, and Jamestown was founded. A descendant of that group of settlers became an ancestor of the Allen clan in Winchester, Virginia. By covered wagon a trek of the Allens ended in Michigan, and they became one of the founding families of this "Village". Also, please don't forget the Mayflower, Plymouth Rock and 1620. If you do, there are those about you who will administer an historical snub!

James I became a complaining old fellow, bringing his aches and pains to the dinner table and astonishing his guests with inopportune remarks between the cup and the lip. He took first prize as the world's greatest hypochondriac.

James I left us in 1625 and was succeeded by Charles I (1625-1649), who was born at the turn of the century, when Shakespeare was still in his prime.

Charles and the Parliamentarians could not agree, and England was plunged into an exhaustive civil war. In this reign the great William Harvey theorized on the "Circulation of the blood" in 1628. He became the comforter to Henrietta Marie, daughter of Henry IV of France and fast approaching widow of Charles I.

The English felt that Charles should have his polemic head examined. Hence they cut it off to have a look.

We are now in the mid-seventeenth century. Such an event brings us to the Cromwellian Revolution and the Puritans. Here is Professor Preston Slosson to acknowledge this cue from his home on Anglophile Devonshire Road. He will march you from the mid-1600's to 1958 and Elizabeth II.

II. FROM CROMWELL TO QUEEN ELIZABETH II

by Preston W. Slosson
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Speaking first of words and languages, I have often thought the best example I know of word mixtures to be "remacadamizing" which illustrates how we can take over words not only from one language but many languages and with a complete unconsciousness that they aren't related at all. It is derived from five different language stocks. You are simultaneously talking Latin (re), Celtic (mac), Hebrew (Adam), Greek (ize), and Anglo-Saxon (ing).

We have come up now to the only time when England was a republic; called a commonwealth. Actually, it was a dictatorship. In fact, superficially, you might say that the results of Cromwell's government were chiefly negative. They gave England a distaste for republics, dictators, standing armies and Puritans.

Since then, England has been at least officially churched by the Church of England. For a period of 200 years and more she was reluctant to have more than a corporal's guard in the army in time of peace. But the upshot was not the old-fashioned hereditary divine right monarchy, which the cavaliers desired, either. That is what happens when you get a revolution--something emerges that isn't what either side wanted. What you got was the practical, matter-of-fact, tolerant, easy-going, business-like 18th Century England, about as far removed from either Cromwell or Charles as anything could be. Charles II had sense enough to realize that he couldn't govern as the Tudors had governed, so he played politics with his own parliament. If he hadn't been somewhat lazy, he might have almost been a dictator. On the surface, people only saw a good-natured, easy-going man of compromise. He wouldn't admit that he was a Catholic until he was on his deathbed. He concealed his business of government. He put on a show of always having a good time; he said, "God wouldn't damn a man for having a little pleasure." Lacking a legitimate son (having plenty of the other kind) his brother James II took the throne.

James lacked Charles' tolerance and sense of humor. It took only three years for him to arouse England into rebellion. William III was, to be sure, a son-in-law of King James, but since James had a Catholic son of his own, this gave William no claim at all. As is often the way in politics, Charles II was very popular, but William III, who was very able, was very unpopular because he was foreign and tactless. In fact, it required a poet to remind the English that if William were a foreigner, all the English were foreigners too. William like so many kings, failed in his first duty, to produce offspring. He was succeeded by Queen Anne, who produced 17 children, but none survived her. That put England in a terrible fix. They had to choose between a thoroughly alien, remote German, who happened to be descended from James I, or take the so-called Old Pretender, who called himself James III of England and VIIIth of Scotland, and who was, like his father, a strong Roman Catholic. It was a hard choice and created a small rebellion in Scotland.

Nevertheless, as a choice of evils they decided to put alien George on the throne, preferring the King who couldn't so much good to a Catholic who could do harm. After all, although George's merits were chiefly negative, he was not a tyrant, nor a Stuart. His coming to the throne was probably a great advantage to the British Constitution, because he was almost the first King who took no interest in the government of England. He absented himself from cabinet meetings because he couldn't follow English discussion, and so the English invented a new institution, the Prime Minister; a man to act in the King's name and assume responsibility. In that way the English were able to place royalty on a shelf like a piece of highly-valued china, far out of political reach. You might almost say that the King or Queen of England "reigns but does not govern," as George II expressed it: "In England, the ministers are the Kings." Although George II wasn't bright, he hit the nail on the head that time.

George III, unfortunately, tried to be a politician with the other politicians; even he had too much sense to copy the game of Charles I and James II. And so, finding that the Whigs of the Revolution of 1688 were far too powerful, he decided to revive the Tories and for that purpose he picked in succession three prime ministers. First, the Earl of Bute, an unpopular and inefficient Scottish noble, an instrument that broke in his hand. During the struggle with America he turned to Lord North. North was able enough, but the King insisted on his own way in the matter of American Colonies and lost thirteen valuable pieces of real estate. The younger Pitt had his father's energy and ability and reminded one of Churchill in the Second World War, who had the same self-confidence. The elder Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, said, "I can save England and nobody else can." Although it was a most vain remark, it happened to be true.

Well, the second son of this great Earl of Chatham was a man with superior qualities. He revived the Tory party and kept it in power continuously for a whole generation. It didn't do King George much good because as one British writer comments, "He lost in his old age the wits that he never had as a young man." So the government had to be carried on without even the pretense of royal rule. George was confronted with the French Revolution and practically all his plans went astray. The example Pitt set probably enabled England to become the victor over the man that nobody else in the world could defeat. As he put it, "England has saved herself by her exertions, and will save Europe by her example." Again, this is the sort of thing Churchill might have said.

The reign of George III was exceptionally important; it covered 60 years. Many of the most important things that ever happened, happened right then and there. The Industrial Revolution for one. Then Great Britain outdistanced all the rest of the world in developing power-driven machines. The Industrial Revolution in that generation was as purely British as the French Revolution was French. That was perhaps the greatest event of those 60 years but there were plenty of other interesting affairs! The French Revolution, Napoleon, the building up of the new British Empire, to replace the one partially lost in America, the Romantic movement in art and literature, the liberal movement in politics. All those things were going on.

Then the fourth and worst of those four Georges succeeded. William IV, the brother of George IV, and his successor on the throne, is important, not in himself, for he had very little to do with things, but it was during his reign that the great reform bill of 1832 was passed. It didn't make England a democracy. You can't even say that as some hasty historians have said, that it put the middle classes in power, because in the century that followed you found people from the House of Lords heading up the government as often as people from the House of Commons. It brought the upper and middle classes together, sharing in political power from then on. Middle class tastes and middle class ideas and reforms practically filled the next reign, which was the longest and the most prosperous, not only that England ever knew, but any country in the world ever knew--the great Victorian Age.

Now England likes queens, with the exception of Bloody Queen Mary. Whatever may be said of the inadequacies or errors of Elizabeth I, or Anne or Victoria, they did happen to reign at particularly brilliant and illustrious periods in English history.

Anne is associated with Marlborough's victory over the French, and the brilliant literature which caused that period to be known as the "Augustan Age". Under Victoria the expansion of British industry made England the greatest commercial power, colonial power, shipping power, financial power, all combined into one. It was marked by a long list of important scientific discoveries illustrated by such names as Lyell, Darwin, Faraday, Lister, and many others. It was a period of slow reforms; reforms in a gradual English style. Nevertheless, when Victoria put away worldly things in 1901, England was as liberal and democratic a country as could be found in the world.

To be sure, England still had a queen, a House of Lords, an established church, and many other customs. That is true, but England in modern times has reminded me of a custom-made automobile which has in its inward workings the very latest engines and machinery but whose eccentric owner has preferred to design the chassis after an ancient stagecoach. This is also symbolized pretty well, I think, by the fact that if you go to France and look for the Bastille, you will find an open square, and not one stone upon the other; whereas, if you go to London and look at the Tower, you will find it almost the same though a little chipped by German bombs. You will find people who will politely show you around, and everything is in the best of repair. It has merely become a museum instead of a prison. Hardly an individual would dream of disturbing the Tower or the monarchy. Somebody has said that if England went Communist, they would call the government "Her Majesty's Soviet."

Edward VII was elderly when he took the throne. He reigned a decade and, so far as he personally was concerned, the period was known chiefly as losing some of the harsh and rigid Victorian traditions. Before the first World War broke out, Edward was succeeded by George V, a good man who for a quarter of a century reigned (or presided) over England. In fact, it was said that "George V was what every Englishman pretended to be but wasn't, whereas Edward VII was what every Englishman would like to be but daren't."

England made one very important change from past history. She tried to conquer France in the Middle Ages and failed. From that time onward, the English very wisely had refrained from following the example of the French and the Germans and the Russians and everybody else. The British interfered in continental wars chiefly with the purpose of protecting the sea routes. In the treaties which concluded those wars the British took their pay in naval bases and colonies. In short, the British were half-way isolationists, though they reserved the right of intervention to preserve the balance of power. The general mood was very well expressed by the English statesman who spoke of England's "splendid isolation." The only trouble with being isolationist is if you don't hunt trouble, trouble may hunt you.

The British had discovered with some uneasiness that such trouble was the one thing that marks the beginning of the 20th Century. Germany, which the British had treated as a poor relation, now emerged in a very different light. It began to build a navy that was a serious rival to the British fleet. The British looked abroad for friends and allies. The British have lost only three or four wars because they have usually been a center of a great alliance. For example, all the 18th Century Wars were won (except the American Revolution) as part of an alliance against France.

They looked first of all to Germany, but Germany slammed the door in Britain's face. They looked to the Japanese in 1902, France in 1904, and Russia in 1907. They built up a vast camp of friends, who were their friends because they could depend on Britain. But the victory in the First World War was too costly. The victors were just as bad off economically and financially as the vanquished. The old colonial type of empire was beginning to weaken. The best of the coal had been mined out, because the British had been mining coal on a large scale long before anyone else. New industrial empires were competing with the British Empire in all departments. A great depression caused widely spread unemployment.

When George V died he was succeeded by Edward VIII. Now there had only been two Kings of Britain who were never crowned; Edward V, the young boy who was strangled by Richard III, and Edward VIII who was strangled by Wallie Simpson before he could be crowned. The date of the coronation was not changed but the personnel was changed and his brother George VI succeeded him.

After the Second World War Princess Elizabeth became Queen Elizabeth; Elizabeth II in England although the Scotch insist that she is only their Elizabeth I. (A matter of great importance to the Scotch but not to the rest of the world.)

During the Reign of George VI there occurred another "lamentable victory." Once again, and this time against greater odds, the British put forth their strength against German strength and again were victorious. But the strains on British economy on this occasion were too great. It is true that the British by their wise and tactful handling of the situation were able to keep down the losses of the empire and of the people to a minimum. Egypt, Burma, Southern Ireland, and Palestine, were the only territories actually lost. India and many other colonies, however, had to be granted independence in everything but name, by acquiring Dominion status. Great

Britain here is something like her King or Queen, reigning or presiding over an empire rather than actually ruling it.

Nevertheless, even in the day of disaster, when the British no longer stand first in industrial, commercial, or naval strength, the British have escaped other and worse disasters by the exercise of the common sense, moderation, and flexibility which has to a unique degree marked the course of British history. They were never troubled by the shadow of either Fascism or Communism. Britain has met the greatest disasters of the depression and of the World War and politically and to some extent economically as well, has overcome those difficulties.

I will close with an anecdote. It was in a Western saloon. The Bad Man of Crazy Gulch came in shooting off six-shooters with each hand and shouted, "Get out, you skunks, before I shoot you." Some jumped out of the windows, some ran through the doors, some hid under tables and benches. An Englishman standing calmly, drinking his liquor at the bar, turned to the Bad Man of Crazy Gulch and said, "Well, there were a lot of them, weren't there?" Such is the calm aloofness and detachment with which the Briton still confronts the perils of the universe!